IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 6, 9 and 11-15 in accordance with the following:

1. (Currently Amended) A payment form discrimination method for discriminating a payment form which states at least a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

acquiring image data of the form by optically reading the form;

searching <u>by a computer</u> for the payee account number in the image data at an unknown position in accordance with an account number searching rule;

determining <u>by the computer</u> a type of the form based on the payee account number from a document information table that stores account numbers correlated with types of the form; and

recovering <u>by the computer</u> other data from locations according to the determined type of the form,

wherein said account number searching rule comprises:

searching for hyphens in the image data;

~~judging whether or not a plurality of~~ <u>determining at least one location of a</u> <u>specified hyphen arrangement formed by at least one group among the</u> hyphens detected by said search ~~are part of a specified hyphen arrangement~~;

character- recognizing the image data in areas surrounding the <u>at least one</u> <u>location</u> ~~detected hyphens if judged to be part~~ of the specified hyphen arrangement; and

determining ~~whether or not a result of~~ <u>an account number based on</u> the character recognition <u>and</u> ~~matches any~~ <u>matching the</u> account number <u>with account numbers</u> registered in said document information table, the matched account number being the payee account number.

2-3. (Cancelled).

4. (Previously Presented) The payment form discrimination method of claim 1, wherein

the searching comprises:

recognizing a plurality of account numbers on the payment form; and

merging a plurality of results which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

5. (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) A payment form discrimination apparatus for recognizing a form which states a payee account number and a payment amount, comprising:

an image reader for acquiring an image data of the form by optically reading the form;

a processing unit, which performs searching for the payee account number in the image data at an unknown position in accordance with an account number searching rule, discriminates a type of form corresponding to said payee account number from a document information table that stores account numbers correlated with types of the form, and recovers other data from locations according to the determined type of the form;

wherein said processing unit searches for hyphens in the image data, judges whether or not a plurality of determines at least one location of a specified hyphen arrangement formed by at least one group among the detected hyphens are part of a specified hyphen arrangement, character- recognizes the image data in areas surrounding the detected hyphens if judged to be part at least one location of the specified hyphen arrangement, and determines whether or not a result of the account number based on the character recognition and matches any payee the account number with account numbers registered in said document information table, the matched account number being the payee account number.

7-8. (Cancelled).

9. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination apparatus method of claim 1, wherein the process unit recognizes a plurality of account numbers on the payment form, and merges a plurality of results which have been recognized to determine the payee account number.

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 1,

wherein said searching comprises:

recognizing hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image;

~~judging~~ determining whether ~~or not~~ said recognized hyphens are characterizing ~~hyphen registered~~ hyphens ~~in said~~ according to an account number construction rule registered in said searching table; and

character-recognizing an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing ~~hyphen~~ hyphens by a numeric and a hyphen that are an account number recognition category in said searching table.

12. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination method according to claim 4, wherein said searching ~~step~~ further comprises:

~~a step of~~ determining said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

13. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said processing unit recognizes ~~a~~ hyphens defined by said account number recognition category in said searching table from said image, judges whether ~~or not~~ said recognized hyphens are characterizing ~~hyphen~~ hyphens according to ~~registered in said~~ an account number construction rule registered in said searching table, and

character-recognizes an image on areas surrounding to said characterizing ~~hyphen~~ hyphens by a numeric and a hyphen that are an account number recognition category in said searching table.

14. (Currently Amended) The payment form discrimination apparatus according to claim [[9]] 6, wherein said processing unit determines said recognized account number as a merging result from a reject number of plural said character recognition result and a number of recognition character as same character in a same column.

15. (Currently Amended) A method of determining a payment form type, comprising:

optically capturing image data of a payment form of an unknown type;

searching and determining ,by a computer, an account number in an unknown position of the payment form of the unknown type in the image data, by searching for hyphens in the image

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data, and recognizing said payee account number at areas surrounding hyphens detected in the image data;

determining the payment form type using the account number, by the computer; and

recovering data from locations according to the determined payment form type, by the computer,

wherein said searching and determining of the account number comprises:

~~judging whether or not a plurality of~~ determining at least one location of a specified hyphen arrangement formed by at least one group among the hyphens detected by said search ~~are part of a specified hyphen arrangement~~;

character-recognizing the image data in areas surrounding the ~~searched hyphens if judged to be part~~ at least one location of the specified hyphen arrangement; and

determining ~~whether or not a result of~~ the account number based on the character recognition ~~matches any~~ and matching the account number with account numbers registered in a document information table in correlation with a payment form type, the matched account number being the payee account number.

16. (Cancelled).

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